BENGALURU, MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2024 www.Bangaloremirror.com 12 Pages PRICE ₹3

Bangalore Mirror

TEMP Max 26 | Min 18 | Humidity 61% Mostly Cloudy Sensex 78,699 | Nifty 23,813 | Gold 76,519 | Silver 88,797 | Dollar 85.48 | Euro 89.05 | GBP 107.41

TRANSPORT TROUBLE

Even as panel proposes 15% fare hike in all state-run transport corporations, department is bracing for impact of indefinite strike

PAGE 4

LOW ON ENERGY

Total installed capacity of renewable energy in Karnataka at meagre 424.94 MW as compared to 1,599 MW last year

PAGE 6

With 1,424 cases of job fraud in 2024, experts warn against revealing too much in resumes, as fraudsters can steal important personal info to scam vulnerable job seekers

NASTY PIECE OF WORK

Students, freelancers, first-time job seekers may not see red flags in hiring process

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In the digital age, resumes have become a double-edged sword, offering opportunities for employment while exposing job seekers to cybercrime. Personal details like addresses, dates of birth, and key ID details, often included in resumes, are increasingly exploited by fraudsters. Online job portals and digital applications have amplified this vulnerability, making task fraud schemes more prevalent. Cybersecurity experts warn that mishandled information can fuel scams, deceiving both applicants and employers and leading to significant financial and personal losses.

In 2024, a total of 1,423 cases of job fraud, 2,697 cases of task or part-time job fraud, and 51 incidents of data theft were reported. According to Chetan Anand, National Cyber Security Scholar and Cybercrime

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PAGE 3: BANK HEIST

"Avoid adding unnecessary details because discarded or misplaced CVs can lead to identity theft, making personal data easily accessible to criminals
— Kiran Jeevan, Professor

Stolen power

Number of electricity theft cases in city remain high with 645 such cases in last 3 years

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Despite stringent actions being taken, electricity theft cases in Bengaluru remain high. In the last three years, the city has recorded 645 such cases, with more than 218 cases reported in the Bengaluru South division alone.

Sources said that although electricity theft cases have decreased following the implementation of the Gruha Jyothi scheme, incidents of theft for industrial and commercial purposes continue to persist. The BESCOM Vigilance Team has been actively inspecting areas and has documented 645 cases of electricity theft in Bengaluru. So far, 192 cases have been recorded in the current year.

An official said, "In some cases, perpetrators of electricity theft were found to have made illegal connections to under-construction buildings. While there has been a decrease in electricity theft for domestic use, the misuse of residential electricity connections for commercial purposes is increasing in areas with high commercial activity. For instance, illegal connections are often used for welding, grinding, and similar commercial activities. In industrial zones,

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THINGS TO DO

01 Discuss confidence

An engaging evening to discuss science, ideas, and different dimensions of overconfidence, with Beyond Doubt author Vivek Nityananda as he explores the impact of overconfidence on modern society.
When: January 4, 6 pm Where: Library, Bangalore International Centre, Domlur

02 Epic tale

"Vydehi - The Life of Maatha Seetha", a solo thematic production by the acclaimed Acharya Raksha Karthik traces the extraordinary journey of Sita, beginning with her miraculous birth from the earth and her adoption by King Janaka
When: January 5; Where: Medai, Koramangala

03 NYE bash

New Year party with music mixing by city's famous DJs – DJ T-Jorus & DJ Loggy; When: December 31, 8 pm onwards;
Where: Watson's Indiranagar and Ulsoor

04 No resolutions

Guests can leave their resolutions at the door, to reimagine NYE celebration with 'The Anti-Resolution Party'
When: December 31, 7 pm onwards; Where: All outlets of SOCIAL

05 Mardi gras

The Biggest Mardi Gras Carnival Party in Bangalore, a celebration that promises a blend of entertainment, music and live performances. DJ Andrew, Anjan Issar and DJ Nitesze and Lady DJ Vazify will perform. **When: December 31, 8 pm onwards; Where: Moxy Bengaluru Airport (Open-air lawn, poolside, and mezzanine floor)**

Data shows pollution is in the air at Mysore Road

Monitoring system readings reveal air quality index at busy road was 101.16 followed by Peenya Industrial area with 99.7 and Jayanagar with 95.93

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Dominant sources for emission hotspots were industrial zones, traffic junctions, construction sites, and solid waste management facilities

During this winter till mid-December, Mysore Road near Banashankari, Peenya Industrial Area, Jayanagar, and Central Silk Board junction have been the most polluted stations in Bengaluru.

The average monthly air quality index on Mysore Road in November was 101.16, followed by 99.7 in the Peenya Industrial area, 95.93 in Jayanagar, and 93.73 near the Central Silk Board junction in the HSR Layout.

AQI data by the 11Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System (CAAQMS) by Karnataka State Pollution Control Board also shows that many stations exceeded the permissible levels of PM10 and PM2.5 recommended by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

CPCB's annual National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM10 and PM2.5 are 60µg/m3 and 40µg/m3, respectively. However, the average monthly concentration of PM10 was recorded to be more than 60µg/m³ in Jayanagar, near City Railway Station, Hebbal, Central Silk Board junction, Kengeri, Jigani, and Peenya Industrial Area.

PM2.5 exceeded 40µg/m³ in Saneguruvanahalli, Hebbal, Jayanagar, Kengeri, and Jigani.

"Peenya and Jigani are industrial areas whereas Hebbal, city railway station, and Central Silk Board junctions are high vehicular traffic leading to higher levels of particulate matter. The current Indian National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is lenient when compared with the World Health Organization. We must strive to achieve NAAQS standards quickly and focus on stricter air quality standards," said a city-based air quality expert. The AQI data also underlines that some stations recorded multiple days with AQI over 100, with Hebbal's maximum AQI reaching 247 on November 1.

Saneguruvanahalli, NIMHANS, and Kasturi Nagar have been the least polluted.

Interestingly, an emission hotspot study conducted by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) also included these areas in its list of 80 hotspot locations in the city, calculated based on high levels of PM2.5 emission. Out of the 80 polluted locations, Bingipura, Sankey Road, KCDC, Hebbal, Mehkri Circle, Bommasandra, Mavallipura, Jigani, Shanti Nagar, Veerasandra were identified as the 10 most potent emission hotspots. Researchers also said the dominant sources for these hotspots were industrial zones, traffic junctions, construction sites, and solid waste management facilities. "A health study at all these hotspots that are being highlighted by multiple research works and KSPCB data should be conducted on an urgent basis. The AQI values at these hotspots will be much higher than the values that are being reflected by pollution control board's monitoring stations," said the expert.

> **"The current Indian National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is lenient when compared with the WHO** – Air quality expert

KSPCB's current 11 stations to monitor air quality cover residential, commercial, and industrial zones. Air quality is monitored round the clock for primary and secondary pollutants as well as meteorological parameters. The systems are installed at City Railway Station, Hebbal, Saneguruvanahalli, NIMHANS, Jayanagar, KAVIKA Mysore Road, Central Silk Board-HSR Layout, Jigani Industrial Area, RV College of Engineering, Kasturi Nagar RTO and Peenya Industrial Area.

Study reveals skin conditions leave behind emotional scars

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A recent study has revealed the significant psychological challenges faced by patients with skin-of-colour who suffer from conditions like inflammatory, granulomatous, scarring, and pigmentary skin and hair disorders. Published in ResearchGate under the title Psychological Concerns in Ethnic Skin, Psychodermatology, the paper explores the deep connection between skin health and mental well-being.

Dr. CR Satish Kumar, consultant-clinical psychology at Manipal Hospital, Bengaluru, the author of the study nited "Inflammatory, granulomatous, scarring, and pigmentary skin and hair diseases that are specific to skin-of-colour patients have been found to have significant psychological disturbances in a majority of them and mental disorders in a few patients, which have shown to negatively impact the QOL (quality of life) of these patients."

The research paper mentioned that these conditions, often dismissed as cosmetic issues, carry a heavy emotional burden. Disorders like vitiligo, melasma, eczema, and psoriasis not only alter physical appearance but also trigger stress, anxiety, depression, and, in severe cases, suicidal thoughts. The psychological impact of these conditions is often neglected in treatment plans.

Highlighting the psychological implications, the study described three categories of psychodermatology based on the link between skin conditions and mental health. The published paper category includes psychophysiological disorders such as psoriasis and eczema, where the skin disease itself triggers stress and emotional responses. The second involves primary psychiatric disorders, where psychological conditions like trichotillomania (compulsive hair-pulling) lead to self-inflicted skin damage. The third includes secondary psychiatric disorders caused by disfiguring skin conditions like vitiligo and severe acne, which can result in depression, fear, and poor self-esteem.

> **"These diseases are not cosmetic disfigurement only, but they come with severe psychological complications**
> –Dr CR Satish Kumar, Manipal

Dr. Satish Kumar pointed out that the psychosocial impact of these conditions often outweighs their physical effects. "We understand from this chapter that the psychosocial effects of the disease at times may even be greater than the physical impact of the disorder, making it difficult for these patients to adapt to these changes in life," he said.

The study also emphasised the role of resilience in managing these challenges. Resilience, described as a positive adaptation to trauma, plays a crucial role in helping patients recover and cope. By enhancing resilience, patients can develop healthier coping mechanisms, improving their body image, self-esteem, and overall outlook. Psychological interventions, including counseling and resilience-building techniques, help patients become more accepting of their condition, adhere better to treatments, and feel optimistic about their future.

"These diseases are not just cosmetic disfigurement, but they come along with severe psychological complications and QOL impairment. So, along with medical treatment, psychological intervention helps these patients cope with their condition," Dr. Satish Kumar stated in the paper.

Walking is a tricky pole dance at Chalukya Circle footpath

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Lack of coordination between the traffic police and Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and residents has become a nuisance at Basaveshwara Circle aka Chalukya Circle. The footpath here now has no space for pedestrians as at every step of the way , a new electric pole has been fixed. The poles will be used either to fix AI cameras or traffic signals.

It is said that the authorities engaged contractors to install the new poles, but took no measures to remove the old ones. Priya Chetty-Rajagopal, a resident, told BM that citizens were all for traffic management, but cutting 22 branches of a tree just to be able to get some visibility without a formal permission from BBMP or looking at alternatives, was not acceptable.

"Neither do our engineers know anything about it, nor as a ward committee do we know anything. When work of this magnitude is being taken up, basic information given to residents via the contractor and a drawing is needed. Seeing a bulldozer and cement pillar boxes with no context is worrying. I have made many calls but got nowhere as to what it was," she said.

She was told that it is the tree expert committee (TEC), but when she reached out, the

official said his department was not involved. "Finally I was directed to the Traffic Planning department where the ACP planning Prabhakar said this was for AI computerisation, etc. but basic information via a sign board or the drawings should be provided by the contractor and informed to residents like us. It's been three days, but we still have not heard back," said Chetty-Rajagopal.

She said that two subways are completely redundant as there are already pedestrian crossings there.

Demanding that the traffic police and the BBMP ensure that footpaths are free of all types of hurdles, Kathyayini Chamaraj, Executive Trustee of CIVIC Bangalore, said the authorities have to avoid wasting tax-payers' money in the name of developmental works.

"I filed an application under the RTI Act seeking information on the skywalk under construction in front of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on Race Course Road. I got a reply stating that they do not have data on the tender notification of the skywalk," she said.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioner (Traffic - Planning) said that no hurdles would be created for pedestrians. "The government is doing whatever is possible for the benefit of the public. ATSC cameras are being installed at Basaveshwara Circle. We will take measures to remove old poles to facilitate space for pedestrians to walk on the footpath," the ACP said.

SKODA

The great bank e-heist

27% rise in financial frauds involving bank and amount swindled has risen by 30% as compared to last year

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Bank frauds in India have seen a sharp rise, as highlighted in the latest Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report. The report points to a 30% increase in amount involved in financial fraud cases involving credit cards, online banking, and digital payment systems.

The number of reported frauds rose by 27% year-on-year, totalling 18,461 cases, up from 14,480 cases in the same period the previous year. More notably, the total amount involved in these frauds surged over eightfold to ₹21,367 crore, compared to ₹2,623 crore in the corresponding period last year.

Collaboration needed

Private sector banks reported the majority of these cases, while public sector banks accounted for the highest amounts involved. Additionally, there has been a rise in digital frauds involving internet and card transactions, underscoring the need for enhanced monitoring and improved coordination between law enforcement and financial institutions.

Experts believe that the law enforcement agencies, along with the banking sector, should step up efforts to combat this menace. Enhanced coordination between cybercrime units, state police forces, and financial institutions is seen as critical. In recent times, initiatives like real-time fraud detection systems and the increased sharing of intelligence on fraudulent activities have already uncovered several organised fraud networks.

> **"Eighty percent of these crimes are domestic, often facilitated by training centers, while the remaining 20% involve crypto-related frauds from abroad**

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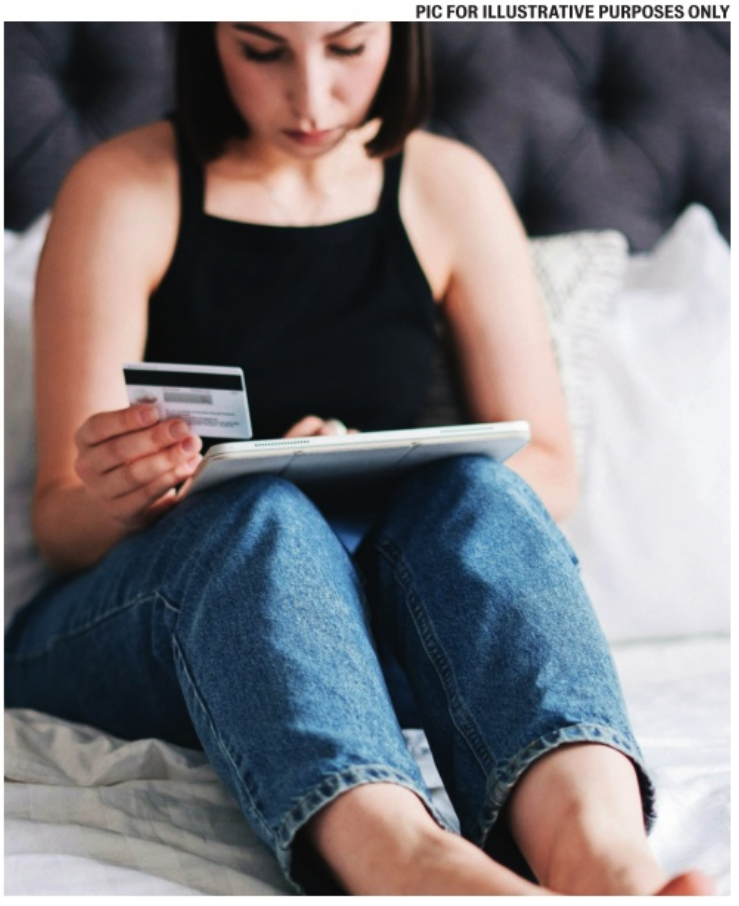

Mirza Faizan Asad, a cybersecurity expert, emphasized, "While freezing accounts is not enough, lean marking of accounts suspected of involvement in fraud and enabling quicker investigations is necessary. Digital evidence plays a pivotal role, and its timely utilization can significantly disrupt fraud operations."

Jurisdictional challenges

Despite these measures, challenges remain. Victims often report being redirected to multiple police stations due to jurisdictional issues, which delays action and gives fraudsters time to act. Experts believe this negligence must be addressed. "Any police station should be empowered to accept cyber fraud complaints," an expert said.

Additionally, public awareness is critical. Even with advanced security protocols, fraudsters exploit human vulnerabilities through phishing scams and unauthorised access to sensitive banking details.

Asad noted a prevalence of social engineering tactics, where individuals are lured into fraudulent investment schemes. "Eighty percent of these crimes are domestic, often facilitated by training centers, while the remaining 20% involve crypto-related frauds from abroad," Asad noted.

More awareness

Experts also highlighted the psychological impact of cyber fraud, stating, "There is a pervasive fear of cyber fraud. No links or numbers can be trusted anymore. A multi-pronged approach involving law enforcement, public education, and stringent banking practices is the need of the hour."

However, police officials say cracking down on these cyber frauds is sometimes very difficult as they are connected internationally with multiple fraudsters operating and complicating it further. "These networks are often globally interconnected, making it extremely challenging to trace and dismantle them," a senior police official remarked.

RBI guidelines offer victims the option of refunds if financial fraud is reported within 24 hours. Awareness campaigns, including the use of cautionary caller tunes, can reinforce this message. Experts also advocate for law enforcement to act faster by using more digital evidence and marking suspicious accounts early in

HC okays adoption without biological father's consent in rape case

The High Court has overturned a sub-registrar's decision that rejected an adoption deed registration application. The sub-registrar had insisted on obtaining consent from the child's biological father, who is imprisoned on rape charges. The court has instructed the official to proceed with the registration without requiring such consent.

Justice Hemant Chandangoudar granted a petition challenging the endorsement dated November 11, 2024. The petition was jointly filed by the 16-year-old victim mother, her mother, and the prospective adoptive couple.

The ruling emphasised that the adoption complies with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, Rules 2016, and Regulation 7(7) of Regulations 2017, which permits a mother of an illegitimate child to surrender the child for adoption.

The court determined that children without capable natural guardians effectively qualify as "orphans". It stated that preventing such adoptions would violate their constitutional right to dignity under Article 21. The court affirmed that adoption in these circumstances represents both a legal right and an ethical responsibility to ensure the child's wellbeing and development.

The sub-registrar had rejected the adoption deed dated November 11, 2024, citing incomplete documentation due to the absence of the biological father's consent as an executing party. The court addressed whether consent from a biological father accused of rape was necessary, in addition to the consents already provided by the minor victim mother and her guardian.

Rising costs lead K'taka to propose 15% bus fare hike

Fare increase for state-run transport corporations is being considered to address financial difficulties; decision is pending approval, aiming to balance finances amid rising operational costs

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KSRTC faces Rs 295 crore loss, mainly due to Shakti scheme offering free bus travel for women

A high-level committee has proposed a 15% fare increase across all four state-run transport corporations in Karnataka, including the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC). This recommendation aims to address the financial strain caused by rising operational costs and recent revenue shortfalls.

The last fare hike for all four corporations occurred in 2010 when diesel prices stood at Rs.30 per litre In 2020, a hike was implemented for three corporations, excluding BMTC, as diesel prices rose to Rs.60 per litre. Now, nearly five years later, discussions about another hike are underway.

Officials underscored the critical need for this fare hike, stating that the corporation's survival is at risk without it. Over the past three months, KSRTC has suffered losses amounting to Rs.295 crore, officials noted. Sources attribute this deficit primarily to the implementation of the Shakti scheme, which provides free bus travel for women. Additionally, the surge in fuel prices and increased costs of automobile parts have further exacerbated the financial difficulties.

The proposed fare hike awaits approval from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy has previously affirmed the government's commitment to the Shakti scheme, pledging its continuation for at least the next decade despite the financial implications.

He also argued that despite the implementation of the Shakti scheme, which has increased income, BMTC faces daily expenditures of Rs.40 crore against an income of Rs.34 crore. He told BM "While we don't have any losses, there is a delay in addressing financial gaps. What's important is that there hasn't been a fare hike despite expenditures exceeding income. The plan to hike fares is still under consideration and hasn't been made public yet."

Public debate

The fare hike proposal has sparked a political debate, with opposition parties accusing the government of mismanaging public transport finances. They argue that the hike contradicts the benefits offered under the Shakti scheme and places an undue financial burden on male passengers who do not qualify for free travel.

BMTC's position

BMTC officials have acknowledged the complexity of the decision. "There is no clarity yet on the fare hike decision," a BMTC official stated. "Once we receive directions from higher authorities, we will proceed accordingly," official said.

> **There is no clarity yet. Once we receive directions from authorities, we will proceed accordingly** – BMTC official

The final decision lies with the state government, which faces the challenge of balancing the financial stability of its transport corporations with the public's demand for affordable transportation. The outcome will significantly impact daily commuters across the state, though there is no immediate decision about the hike of the bus fares yet.

ESMA period extended to avert transport strike

Following the indefinite strike call by transport workers starting December 31, the Transport Department has initiated all possible efforts to prevent the strike. On Saturday, a meeting was held under the leadership of Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, where officials discussed strategies to prevent the bus strike. The transport workers have announced their intention to strike, demanding a wage hike, pending salary increases, and the fulfilment of other demands.

During the meeting, discussions were held on the financial status of the corporations and the demands of the workers' unions. However, no final decision was made regarding the actions to be taken to persuade the striking unions. Instead, there was a suggestion to arrange a meeting between the union leaders and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. It is expected that if the opportunity is given, a mediation meeting may take place under the Chief Minister's leadership on Monday evening.

Transport unions to be restricted from protesting

To prevent the strike, the transport corporations are using the ESMA (Essential Services Maintenance Act) as a tool. Several months ago, an ESMA order was imposed for six months, prohibiting workers from engaging in any protests. This period has now been extended for another six months. The Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation has issued the order, stating that bus services will fall under the Karnataka Essential Services Maintenance Act. As per the new order, workers will not be allowed to participate in strikes from January 1 for the next six months.

Efforts to prevent the strike

"I have held discussions with the chairpersons, vice-chairpersons, and senior officials of all four corporations. I have appealed to the workers' unions to back down from their strike plans. They are aware of the financial situation of the corporations. I have urged them not to go ahead with the strike, and we will take all necessary steps to prevent it," said Transport Minister, Ramalinga Reddy.

Mediation meeting today

About the indefinite strike, the Joint Action Committee of the State Road Transport Corporations' workers' unions has issued a strike notice to the Labour Department. In response, the Labour Department will organise a mediation meeting with the leaders of the Joint Action Committee and officials from all four corporations. — BMB

Buses till 2 AM on Jan 1

On the other hand, BMTC has announced that it will operate special bus services catering to commuters travelling between MG Road/Brigade Road and various locations across the city. These buses will run from 11 pm to 2 am. In addition to the MG Road and Brigade Road routes, BMTC has arranged for special bus services from key junction points and bus stations across the city. These services will operate from areas including Kempegowda Bus Station, KR Market, Shivajinagara, Koramangala, Kadugodi, Kengeri, Sumanahalli, Goraguntepalya, Yeshwanthapura, Yelahanka, Shanthinagar, Banashankari, Hebbal, and Central Silk Board, ensuring comprehensive coverage for all commuters.

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Problems in your area?
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Road woes

Jakkur

The stretch near Jakkur Raithara Santhe Market has been dug up by authorities.

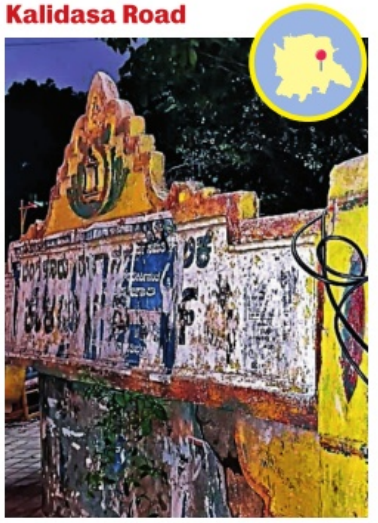
Path congestion

Basavanagudi

Church Road in Basavanagudi lacks proper footpaths, with parked vehicles blocking space for pedestrians. Motorists use it as a shortcut, causing inconvenience to residents.

Poster woes

Kalidasa Road


Kalidasa Road, near Kurubara Sangha and adjacent to Freedom Park, is cluttered with posters on the board, creating an eyesore.

Bengaluru will spare no expense to have a great NYE bash

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The city is all set to usher in the New Year with a grand celebration, with an expected 1,000 crore worth of business in the city's hospitality industry over the last two days of this year. Currently, approximately 80% of bookings for hotels, pubs, and restaurants have already been made, with rates seeing an increase of 10-20%. These prices may rise further as the final moments approach. Party hotspots such as MG Road, Brigade Road, Church Street, Indiranagar, Koramangala, Whitefield, Electronic City, and other tech corridors are ready to get into the party mood. Private parties are also expected to be in full swing at hotels, guesthouses, and homestays on the outskirts, including areas like Kanakapura Road and Outer Ring Road.

Variety of festive party vibes

The celebrations will feature an exciting mix of celebrity DJs, live performances with dance performances, campfires, open-air parties, poolside parties, rain dances, and fire dances. Famous artists and singers will be performing, and special arrangements have been made for VIPs, VVIPs, celebrities, family counters, and a separate area for children with exclusive menus.

Safety measures and cab services

For safety, security measures have been arranged for both women and men, and post-party cab services are available to ensure safe travel home. Hotels are also providing accommodation options.

Increased prices this year

Compared to last year, party access, food, and accommodation prices have increased. Deluxe and premium party packages at pubs and hotels are priced between 2,000 and 5,000 per person, while couple packages range from 3,000 to 8,500. Early bookings offer discounts of up to 30%. Tickets for children start at 1,000, while VIP packages, including accommodation and breakfast on January 1, range from 22,000 to 30,000. Discounted packages are also available.

80% of hotel, pub, and restaurant bookings are confirmed

A businessman said, "Around 1,000 crore worth of business is expected from hotels, pubs, bars, and restaurants, with the government set to collect 300-400 crore in taxes. Last year, the total turnover was approximately 800 crore. This year, the hospitality industry is poised to see even greater revenue".

Tourist places filled up

While Bengaluru is buzzing with party scenes for year-end, a section of Benglaureans are travelling outside the city to neighbouring districts as well as to other states to celebrate year-end revelry. Thousands of tourists are flocking to Kodagu to experience its serene landscapes. Madikeri, the district's headquarters, which has consistently topped the list of cities with the least air pollution, is expected to emerge as the Best Year-End Destination this season. Popular hotel booking platforms have seen a surge in bookings, leading to an increase in room rates for hotels, resorts, and homestays across the district.

Chilly weather in Kodagu: Draw for tourists

Sources said that December and January are prime tourist seasons in Kodagu, with the highest number of visitors arriving during this period. Despite heavy rainfall during the monsoon, which had temporarily slowed down tourism, the year-end season is seeing a resurgence in visitor numbers.

Celebrations in full swing

Many resorts, homestays, and clubs in Kodagu are hosting a variety of events to celebrate the New Year. These include DJ parties, music sessions, New Year cake cutting, and firework shows, along with lavish dinner arrangements.

Growing tourist flow

With the rise in tourist arrivals, most hotels and homestays have already been booked for the last days of the year and New Year's Day. Tour operators and hotel owners are expecting a significant increase in tourism. Anita Bhaskar, Deputy Director of the Tourism Department said, "This year, we expect a higher influx of tourists compared to previous years, especially after the monsoon setback."

K'taka's energy growth dims amid policy snags

Karnataka's installed renewable energy capacity stands at 424.94MW this year, down from 1599.50 MW last year; experts expect growth as new solar projects progress

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Karnataka appears to be falling behind in the Renewable Energy (RE) race.

As of November, the total installed capacity of RE in Karnataka this year stands at 424.94MW. Last year, between April 2023 and March 2024, the state's installed capacity was an impressive 1599.50MW. Out of the total RE commissioned projects this year so far, the majority are under solar energy (150.78MW), followed by wind (131.325MW), rooftop solar (113.14MW), and hybrid (29.70MW).

This data by Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd (KREDL) highlights that the number of RE projects commissioned in the state over the last few years has declined.

Experts say the installed capacity of solar projects should increase in the next financial year as a few projects are in the pipeline.

Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) bids for big RE projects but the agency is mostly focused on other states such as Rajasthan where the land prices are cheaper.

Central bids by SECI and NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation) are focused on central transmission utilities for ease of power transmission. Karnataka has around four central transmission utilities but are already maxed out. However, these utilities are in the process of enhancing their capacity. Such measures take some time. Currently, two utilities- one near Gadag and the other near Raichur- are in the process of enhancing capacities. Thus, Karnataka might be in a position to bag more RE projects in the next financial year, improving its current installed capacity," said Ramesh Shivanna, president of the Karnataka Renewable Energy Systems Manufacturers Association (KRESMA).

Karnataka could secure more RE projects in next financial year, boosting its installed capacity

> **"Investors are skipping K'taka and going for states such as Rajasthan due to land availability and much lower cost**
> – Ramesh S, KRESMA

Some experts underline that Karnataka will have to bring in a few policy changes if it has to play an important role in India's ambitious renewable energy target of achieving 500 GW from non-fossil sources by 2030. Issues with land availability and high land prices are major setbacks for renewable energy in Karnataka.

Karnataka decided to promote the solar sector with several policy interventions, one being the policy of deemed conversion. Under the policy, the state fixed the timeframe for grant of deemed conversion as 15 days given all documents are submitted by the applicant. However, experts say it is not yielding the desired results.

"While the state brought in 'deemed conversion policy for solar projects, it is not going as per the plan. It is an online process and the ownership documentation requirement for land conversion is extensive. The timeframe set by the government for deemed conversion is not yielding results as the documentation itself is months. This aspect should be simplified," said a city-based RE expert.

"Investors are skipping Karnataka and going for states such as Rajasthan due to land availability and at a much lower cost than Karnataka. The state government should consider excluding the Land Reform Act in favour of renewable energy projects," said Shivanna.

HC clarifies disabled victim statement rules

The Karnataka High Court determined that recording statements from individuals with temporary or permanent mental or physical disabilities requires mandatory assistance from an Interpreter or Special Educator, along with video documentation.

A petition was filed at the Kalaburagi Bench seeking to nullify a victim's statement recorded by the Magistrate under Section 164 CrPC and a Sessions Judge's order. The petitioner requested directions for proper recording of the victim's statement under Section 164 (5A) of CrPC.

Justice Mohammad Nawaz stated, "If the statement of a person with a permanent mental or physical disability, was not taken following the due procedure contemplated under Section 164 of CrPC then such statement cannot be considered as a statement in lieu of examination-in-chief, as specified under Section 137 of Indian Evidence Act."

The petitioner faced charges under Sections 376 (l) and 376 (n) of IPC for alleged sexual assault on a mentally challenged victim resulting in pregnancy. A report from the Department of Clinical Psychology, Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Dharwad, indicated the victim's moderate intellectual disability, leading the Court to conclude she was unfit to comprehend court proceedings.

> **"The provision to Section 164 (5A) (a) makes it mandatory to take assistance of an interpreter or a special educator** – Court

The defence contended that the victim's statement under Section 164 CrPC was inadmissible as evidence, citing non-compliance with Section 164 (5A) requirements regarding interpreter assistance and video recording. The Court emphasised, "The provision to Section 164 (5A) (a) makes it mandatory to take the assistance of an interpreter or a special educator and for videographing while recording the statement of a person who is temporarily or permanently mentally or physically disabled." **— BMB**

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

HDK turns up the heat on officials

"Should I write to the Union Transport Minister asking to suspend you?" former CM HD Kumaraswamy warned an NHAI (National Highways Authority of India) official during the DISHA Committee meeting in Mandya last Thursday. The discussion on the Bengaluru-Mysuru National Highway heated up when a junior officer, instead of the Project Director, appeared and struggled to answer questions. "Call your senior or the Project Director. We'll discuss highway matters when they show up," HDK declared, temporarily shifting gears to other topics. By the afternoon, another official appeared, but the elusive Project Director was still a no-show. Every question HDK and the MLAs posed was met with evasive replies: "Not in our jurisdiction," "We don't have that information." This pushed Kumaraswamy to the brink, forcing him to issue a stern warning about the substandard highway work. "I'll write to the Union Transport Minister to suspend you," he said, demanding the Deputy Commissioner issue a show cause notice to the NHAI officials right then and there. HDK also had some frosty words for the Cooperative Department officials. "Don't bow to political pressure and trouble the people. Work honestly and with integrity. Is what you're doing even legal? If you're so arrogant here in this meeting, I can only imagine how you treat the common man. Drop this attitude, or I'll teach you a lesson myself," he claimed.

Social media help

A woman who had been missing for about 23 years has been reunited with her family, through the efforts of the Social Welfare Department. The woman, Sakamma from Hosapet, Ballari district, was traced after a tweet by Vijaykumar G on the social media platform X, tagging the Principal Secretary Major Manivannan. Social Welfare Minister Dr HC Mahadevpappa stated that a 50-year-old woman, missing for over two decades, was found in Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh, two years ago after unknowingly travelling there by train. The government took immediate action after Major Manivannan P directed the Social Welfare Department to assist in bringing her back to Karnataka. On December 21, the team reached Chandigarh, found Sakamma at a senior citizens' home in Mandi, and, after confirming her details via video call, brought her back to Bangalore on December 24.

Late coming saga

At a Gram Panchayat meeting in Byramangala, Bidadi, chaired by Magadi MLA HC Balakrishna, a food department official arrived late and was greeted with a garland as a unique welcome. The garland, however, delivered a clear message—timeliness matters. Under the watchful eye of MLA Balakrishna, this floral lesson served as a light-hearted yet pointed reminder. The MLA instructed the official to ensure punctuality in future, proving once again that the clock waits for no one.

War of words

The war of words between MLC CT Ravi and Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar escalated into challenges. Hebbalkar challenged Ravi to swear an oath at Dharmasthala if he denied allegedly using an abusive word against her. She claimed, "If Ravi says he didn't say that, let him prove it with an oath, and I'll bring my family along." He refused to engage with Hebbalkar's challenge, suggesting it was all just political theatrics. Meanwhile, Hebbalkar took to the media, questioning Ravi's integrity, adding, "I'm walking the Gandhian path, not following his erratic ways." The verbal duel intensified as both leaders continued their fiery exchanges, with Ravi vowing to fight back legally and politically.

Internal rift

BJP has been facing internal rebellion for a while. The latest round of dissidence surfaced over the Mysore Corporation's suggestion to name a road after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Mysuru MP Yaduveer Wadiyar, BJP state president BY Vijayendra, and opposition leader R Ashoka are all against it, but former MP Pratap Simha is all for it. Wadiyar, expressing his displeasure, said the road should stay true to its royal roots. "The KRS Road didn't just pop up—it's tied to the heritage of Mysuru. Naming roads after popular leaders is fine, but let's keep it historical" Wadiyar pointed out that the original name was a tribute to Maharani Krishnajammanni, who passed away from tuberculosis, prompting the construction of a TB hospital in her memory. Former BJP MP Pratap Simha, however, couldn't see the issue. "Siddaramaiah is a proud son of Mysuru. What's wrong with honouring him?" he asked. **— Sridhar Vivan**

Land grab: No e-khata, but property's sale deed is ready

Suspension of sub-registrars points to forgery, corruption while registering property documents

| Y Maheswara Reddy
c-y.reddy@timesofindia.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The recent suspension of two sub-registrars for registering properties illegally has revealed that the rot in the system runs deep.

The authorities deserve appreciation for suspending the sub-registrars, but they need to do much more to ensure sub-registrars do not collude with middlemen and land mafia to grab properties of hapless people.

Such a collusion is not new in the state. In 2002, five sub-registrars were suspended for illegally registering properties. In May 2024, the Karnataka High Court warned sub-registrars for unlawful refusal of registering property documents.

However, the instances of corruption keep cropping up. In one of the two recent cases, the sub-registrar of Varthur allegedly registered a property that does not have an e-khata certificate. The sub-registrar registered a sale deed on September 1, 2023 pertaining to 1,400 sq ft of a commercial property at Seegehalli. A case has been pending in the court since 2018. The case is related to fake signatures on a sale deed that was registered at Mahadevapura Sub-Registrar Office on October 13, 2018. The owner of the commercial property lodged a complaint with Mahadevapura police who sent the signatures to a Forensic Laboratory for verification.

According to documents available with Bangalore Mirror, the buyer of the property lodged a complaint with Ashok Nagar Police Station claiming that he hails from Mothagappali village in Vellore District and travelled to Bengaluru to go to a bank on MG Road. He claims that he has lost original sale deed document and other documents when he had a fall while walking on Brigade Road. "I did not realise that these documents went missing and after a thorough search of my house I could not locate it and filed a complaint with Ashoknagar Police Station on November 20, 2018. The Ashoknagar Sub-Inspector of Police issued me an acknowledgement after registering a complaint. So I am not able to provide the original sale deed No. 6747/2018-19 on request," the letter by Babu Raghavaiah read.

Authorities need to ensure sub-registrars do not collude with middlemen and land mafia to grab properties of hapless people

Sub-registrar of Varthur registers sale deed on September 1, 2023 for 1,400 sq ft of a commercial property at Seegehalli that is caught in court case over allegations of forgery

The investigating officers failed to ask Babu Raghavaiah to produce a medical certificate or details on whether he was admitted to a hospital for treatment. This is a classic example of how officials collude with land mafia.

Meanwhile, the Forensic Laboratory has confirmed that the signatures were forged and a case is pending in the court.

Despite that the Varthur Sub-Registrar registered a sale deed in favour of one Lakshminarayana. This was the same property that was allegedly registered at Mahadevapura Sub-Registrar Office, though a case related to it is pending in the court. The sale deed was registered on September 1, 2023 and a rectification deed on October 30, 2023 using e-khata of another property.

Quashing rape case would be a 'travesty'

The High Court has declined to dismiss criminal proceedings against a Tumakuru resident charged with sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl with mental disabilities. Justice M Nagaprasanna stated that dismissing the case would undermine justice, as the accused had engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour that exceeded reasonable boundaries. On December 10, 2023, the accused lured the victim to his residence by offering sugarcane. Although the victim's mother learned about the incident immediately, she hesitated to report it due to social concerns and her daughter's condition. She filed a report 11 days later when her daughter continued experiencing discomfort in her private areas.

The Tumakuru authorities charged the accused under IPC Section 376(l) and Section 4 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO). The accused argued that the high court had previously granted bail due to delayed reporting. He also contested the reliability of the victim's statements under CrPC section 164, citing her mental condition. Justice Nagaprasanna clarified that the bail order was solely for release purposes. The court noted that the victim had identified the accused and described his actions in her Section 164 statement.

The court determined that questioning the testimony of the 13-year-old victim cannot warrant dismissal of the proceedings. "It could at best be subject to further proceedings. The allegation against the petitioner in the case at hand is undoubtedly heinous and horrendous," Justice Nagaprasanna said. The court added: "The behaviour of the petitioner cannot but be described to be a paraphiliac, albeit, prima facie. It is ununderstandable as to how the petitioner seeks quashment of the proceedings basing his foundation on the score of stray answers of a mentally retarded child in her cross-examination." **–BMB**

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Key EPFO rule changes to expect in 2025

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) is set to undergo several significant changes in 2025, impacting millions of salaried individuals across India. These changes aim to enhance the retirement savings experience, streamline processes, and improve transparency for both employees and employers.

These changes are expected to have a significant impact on the financial security of millions of Indian workers, ensuring a more robust and secure retirement for the future. Here are some important new rules which could be implemented in 2025 to benefit EPFO members.

PF money from ATM

According to the reports, the EPFO will issue an ATM card that will enable subscribers to withdraw money around the clock as part of a significant overhaul of services for members. It is anticipated that this ATM withdrawal service will be implemented during the next fiscal year. The new guidelines streamline the fund withdrawal process for subscribers, making it quicker and easier.

Employee's contribution

According to reports, employees' EPF contribution cap will be eliminated. At the moment, workers fund the EPF account each month with 12% of their base pay. However, rather than using the Rs 15,000 set by the EPFO, the government is thinking of letting workers contribute according to their actual pay.

Increase in equity limit

EPFO is thinking about reinvesting a portion of the ETF redemption earnings back into stocks and other assets, as per some reports.

Pensions from any bank branch

In September 2024, Minister of Labour and Employment of India Mansukh Mandaviya approved the centralised pension payment system (CPPS), which will enable 7.8 million members of the Employee Pension Scheme to take their pensions from any bank branch in India as of January 1, 2025.

Higher pension deadline

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) via its press release dated December 18, 2024, has given the last chance for employers to upload wage details of employees by January 31, 2025. Further, employers are required to provide clarification requested by EPFO by January 15, 2025, to process the higher pension application.

EPF changes implemented in 2024

Mandatory uploading of cheque leaf image

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation has relaxed the requirement of mandatory uploading of the image of cheque leaf, and attested bank passbook for certain eligible cases.

This would facilitate the settlement of online claims more quickly and lower the amount of rejected claims resulting from the failure to submit an image of the certified bank passbook or cheque leaf at the time of online claim filing.

New rule for EPF death claim

It has been decided that going forward, in all such death cases, processing physical claims without seeding Aadhaar may be permitted as a temporary measure, but only with the proper approval of the OIC in an e-office file duly recording the details of verification done to confirm the deceased's membership and the genuineness of the claimants. Preventing any fraudulent withdrawals can be done in addition to other due diligence measures that the OIC deems appropriate.

–By Sneha Kulkarni, ET Online

Tiff among friends leads to murder

A 45-year-old construction worker was murdered by his friend over a trivial row on Sunday under the CK Achukattu police station limits.

The deceased has been identified as Srinivas and the accused as Nagaraj (36), also a construction worker.

According to the police, Srinivas was living with the accused in a rented room after being estranged from his wife.

The accused, Nagaraj, took away Srinivas's mobile and delayed in returning it, which led to a heated argument and Nagaraj attacked Srinivas with an immersion rod used to hear water.

Srinivas suffered a head injury, but he went off to sleep. The next day, he was found dead by Nagaraj, who fled the scene. The police said that they were intoxicated at the time of the incident.

The CK Achukattu police have registered a murder case and arrested the accused. Further investigations are underway.

Man booked for bike stunts

A 21-year-old was booked by the Thalaghattapura traffic police on Sunday for performing bike stunts and not wearing a helmet.

The accused, identified as Naresh, was found performing dangerous stunts on the Anjanapura 80 feet road by the patrolling officers at around 11.45 am on Sunday. The police noted that he was also not wearing a helmet.

He was detained and a case was registered against him. Further probe is underway.

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I, Arbaz Khan A S/o, Arif Khan R/o No 599 3rd Cross Arundathi Nagara Bangalore 560039 have changed my name to Arbaz Khan for all purposes.

I, Aurobindo Kumar Sahoo, R/O 362, 1st Floor, 7th Cross, Lakshmi Road, Shanthinagar, Bangalore-560027 have changed my Son name (minor) from LAXMI PRIYA DAKSH SAHOO to DAKSH SAHOO.

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KAILASH MANSAROVAR 13 DAYS May: 12, 26 June: 10, 24

DUBAI 5 DAYS Jan: 19 Feb: 7, 28 Mar: 10, 25

SINGAPORE MALAYSIA/THAILAND* 7/11* DAYS Jan: 25 Feb: 15 Mar: 20

BANGKOK PATTAYA 5 DAYS Jan: 31 Feb: 21 Mar:27

HONG KONG & MACAU 6 DAYS Feb: 14 Mar: 10

VIETNAM 8 DAYS Feb: 5, 25 Mar: 15

SRI LANKA 7 DAYS Jan: 25 Feb: 15 Mar: 15

Hired & fired

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Intervention Officer, personally identifiable information (PII) in a resume may include full names, father's name, date of birth, residential address with Pin Code, mobile number, email ID, photograph, profile url, marital status, Aadhaar number, passport number and its validity.

Mentioning all the PII beyond what is necessary poses a privacy risk, experts said.

Prof. Kiran Jeevan shared his experience from his time working in a placement cell of a college, where he reviewed nearly 1,500 student resumes. He said, "A common mistake many students make including excessive personal details." He advises keeping CVs concise, limited to essential information such as name and contact details. "Avoid adding unnecessary details because discarded or misplaced CVs can lead to identity theft, making personal data easily accessible to criminals," he explained. He also noted instances where students received unsolicited calls from consultancies offering fake job opportunities, emphasising the risks of sharing too much information.

In September, the Bengaluru police have made a breakthrough in uncovering a massive online job fraud scheme linked to China, arresting 10 persons involved in a ₹6 crore currency-to-cryptocurrency conversion racket. The suspects targeted victims via WhatsApp and Telegram, offering fake job opportunities. A victim who lost ₹25.37 lakh triggered the investigation on July 3. Initially asked to perform simple tasks like rating hotels, victims were later pressured into investing in cryptocurrency. The suspects funneled proceeds through mule accounts, withdrew cash, and converted it to cryptocurrency, sending funds to Chinese handlers.

On September 13, seven suspects were arrested, and cash, mobile devices, and banking materials were seized. Key suspects, Sayed Yahya, Mohammed Umar Faruk, and Mohammed Maheen, were detained at the airport after returning from China.

Vulnerable lot

The lure of task fraud can be particularly dangerous for individuals with little or no experience in digital job applications. Scammers often target vulnerable groups such as students, freelancers, and first-time job seekers who may not have an awareness of the red flags in the hiring process.

Task fraud schemes often involve criminals posing as hiring managers or employers, sending fake job offers to unsuspecting individuals. These offers typically require simple tasks like data entry, survey completion, or product testing, which may appear harmless initially.

However, fraudsters exploit these interactions to collect personal information or gain access to victims' devices. In more severe cases, victims are coerced into transferring money, purchasing gift cards, or sharing banking details under the pretext of payment processing or employment verification.

The rise of online job platforms has further facilitated these scams, providing fraudsters with easy access to detailed resumes uploaded by job seekers. Once made public, these resumes become a goldmine for cybercriminals, who scrape platforms to compile personal information for malicious purposes. In some instances, fraudulent companies request sensitive data, such as bank account details, claiming it is necessary for verifying employment eligibility, thereby increasing the risk of identity theft and financial fraud.

In a case in Hyderabad, the Cyber Crimes Police arrested a woman, Reshma alias Swapna, 30, who was posing as a senior HR manager at Cognizant Technology Solutions and defrauded job seekers of ₹58 lakh.

Reshma, along with accomplice Pydi Supreethi, lured victims through phone calls and online communications, demanding advance payments as "processing fees". Victims received fake offer letters resembling official communications from Cognizant and IBM before all contact was severed. Investigations revealed her ex-husband orchestrated the scam, and Reshma was arrested in Kalaburagi, Karnataka.

As a good practice, not all PII is required to be mentioned in the resume. Only what is absolutely necessary is to be mentioned. "Name and contact information should be sufficient to apply for a job. The applicant may later furnish other PII as required, during the next stage of the application process or during employment. In this way, the processing of PII can be minimised thereby reducing the opportunity to misuse. Always ensure to retrieve your marks card immediately after presenting it to authorities and avoid submitting the original marks card under any circumstances," says Chetan Anand

Kiran Jeevan advises to avoid including photographs in resumes and focus on tailoring the information to suit the company's requirements. Basic details like name, contact number, email ID, are sufficient, he too said. "Additional information such as date of birth, father's name, religion, and caste should be excluded to minimise the risk of misuse and to maintain privacy," he said.

Maximum cases in Bengaluru South division

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

some factories are using electricity without the proper licenses and permissions. Unauthorised connections are often difficult to identify, and despite the possibility of detection with assistance, local residents rarely report these activities."

Threefold penalty for electricity theft

Officials said that under Section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003, stringent actions are taken against those involved in electricity theft. A penalty is imposed for the stolen units, three times the amount used. If the theft is for residential purposes, a fine of ₹5.90 per unit is levied, while for commercial purposes, the penalty is calculated differently. If the penalty is not paid, the police file a charge sheet in court, which can result in jail sentences ranging from six months to three years. Additionally, electricity supply may be cut off for periods ranging from three months to two years.

On the other hand, BESCOM is responsible for managing over 16,000 borewells in the city, though some borewells often fall into disuse. In such cases, the organisations managing these wells fail to inform BESCOM about disconnecting connections. As a result, electricity bills are generated regularly, even though new unauthorised connections are made at nearby borewells.

Examples of electricity theft include meter bypassing, tampering, illegal electricity connections, and damage to electrical infrastructure.

Theft figures

In 2022, the city recorded 59 cases in the South and 63 cases in the East. The following year saw an increase in theft incidents, with the South division reporting 90 cases and the East division maintaining 63 cases. In 2024, up until now, there have been 69 cases in the South and 51 cases in the East. In total, Bengaluru has seen 645 electricity theft cases over the last three years, with 218 cases in the South and 177 in the East.

HEALTH TIP: Sciatica is the medical term for sciatic nerve pain that occurs when the nerve is strained, compressed, inflamed, or injured

Back pain and sciatica sufferers might benefit greatly from yoga asanas

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LOVE IN 2024

Indian dating trends that everyone was talking about...

It's been a year of love, laughter, and a little bit of "what were we thinking?"

In 2024, Indian dating took a turn towards the unexpected, the quirky, and the downright revolutionary. In fact, it's safe to say that this has been a year of redefining what it means to love in the modern age – where texting at the speed of light is as important as knowing how to have a conversation that goes beyond emojis.

So, what's the verdict on the year that was? Let's take a look at the most talked-about trends in Indian dating and why they've got everyone swiping, texting, and maybe even falling head over heels.

NANO-SHIPS, BIG FEELS

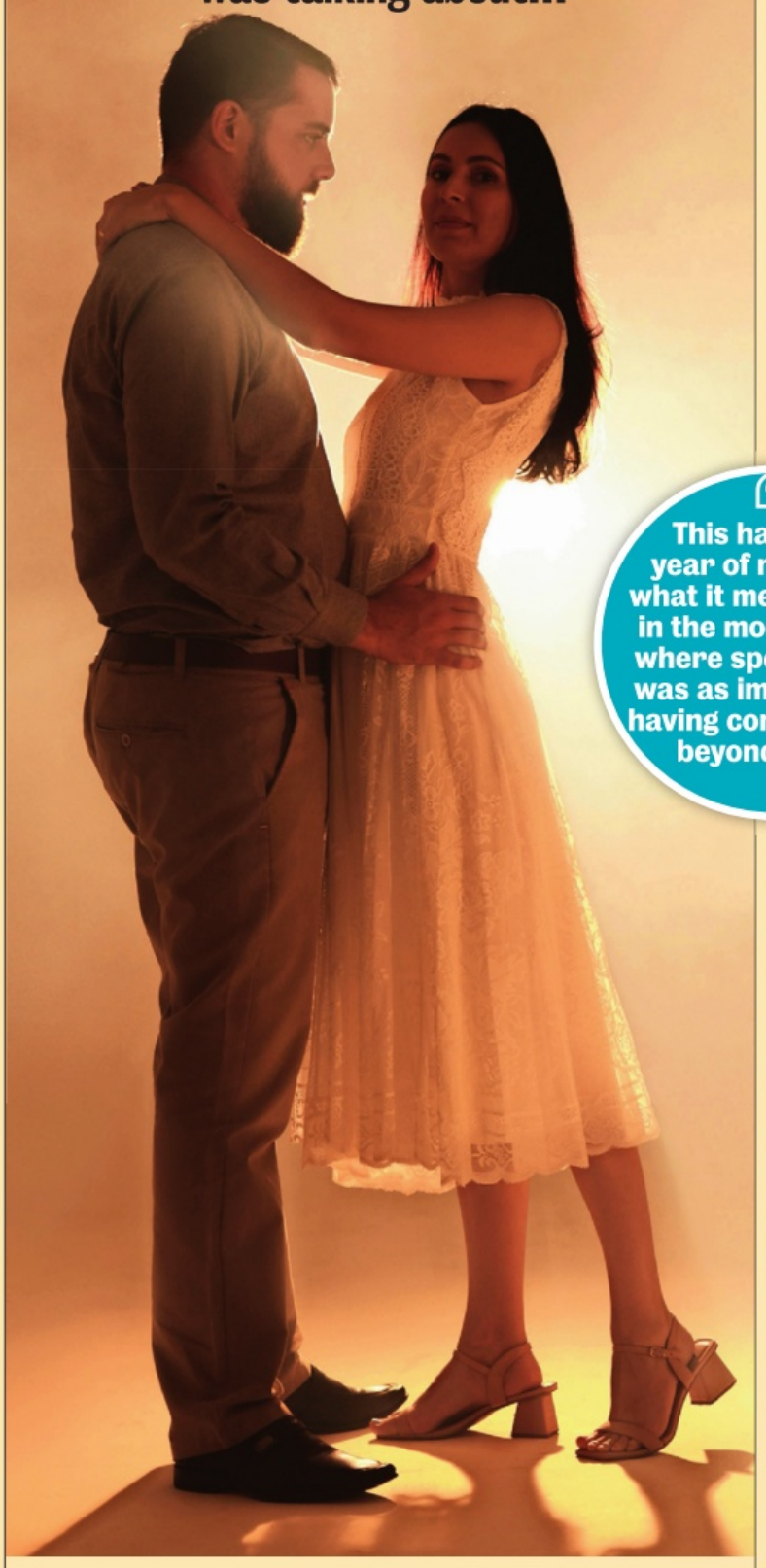
Forget messy situationships; 2024 is all about nano-ships—those tiny romantic sparks that feel like a warm hug from a stranger. Think of it as the meet-cute you didn't see coming: a shared smile with someone on your morning commute or locking eyes with a cutie at your go-to coffee spot. According to dating app Tinder, no interaction is too small to matter. Singles are leaning into these fleeting yet meaningful moments, turning micro-connections into major possibilities. Whether it's for a laugh or something lasting, these little 'nano-nudges' might just be the uninvited guest your love life needed.

REJECTION GOT A PLOT TWIST

Rejection in 2024 wasn't just a dead-end – it came with its own storyline. According to the dating app Happn, Gen Z turned it into a growth moment, taking every swipe-left and ghosting incident as a chance to level up. Millennials in their mid-20s to mid-30s walked the fine line between optimism and realism, brushing it off but approaching future matches with guarded hearts. For older daters, rejection became a reason to pause, with 15% logging out of apps and opting for a detox when Cupid missed the mark. Lesson learned: Rejection may sting, but every age group is rewriting its own recovery playbook.

THE RISE AND RISE OF FEXTING

We've all heard about, probably even dabbled in sexting every now and then. But its lesser-known counterpart, fexting, took the cake this year. Fexting, or fighting over text, is exactly as it sounds: engaging in contentious conversations through digital means rather than face-to-face. These disagreements can span from basic topics like 'You forgot to water the plants again!' to more serious matters that escalate to all-caps messages (the textual equivalent of yelling), lengthy paragraphs, and, if unsuccessful, even threatening emojis.



> "This has been a year of redefining what it means to love in the modern age – where speed texting was as important as having conversations beyond emojis

MICRO-MANCE MANIA

Bumble, the women-first dating app, conducted a survey among Gen Z and millennial users to predict dating trends for 2025. And what do you find? Short-lived but meaningful relationships became the go-to for singles seeking emotional intimacy without the long-term pressure. Gone are the days when romance was all about grand gestures like skywriting declarations of love or lavish dinners by candlelight, Indians are now embracing the beauty of smaller, everyday moments that pack an emotional punch. Think of it as love in bite-sized doses: quality over quantity!

SOFT LAUNCH 2.0

Gone are the days of posting couple selfies right away; now it's all about teasing your new bae with cryptic glimpses – think a hand in the background, matching sneakers, or a half-smile in the corner of a shot. It's the ultimate move for keeping things low-key while still letting your followers know you're definitely seeing someone. Who needs a full-blown reveal when you can leave everyone guessing, right?

GOODBYE GAMES, HELLO INTENTIONAL DATING

Instead of "seeing where it goes," singles are now asking, "Where are we going, and what snacks should we pack?" 2024 saw Indian daters, particularly in urban areas, shifting toward intentional dating – swiping with purpose and actively seeking compatibility. Intentional dating wasn't just a trend; it was a whole vibe – one that ditched the games and made meaningful connections the ultimate goal.

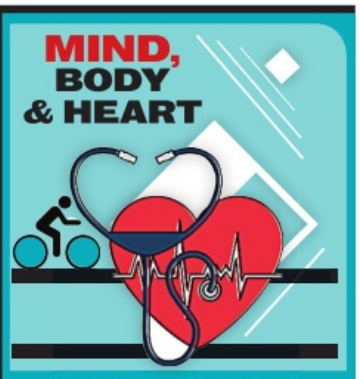
CUPID WHO? IT'S AI ALL THE WAY!

Dating apps in 2024 leveled up their game with advanced AI, turning swipes into science. From your personality traits, communication styles, and even your zodiac sign's compatibility (for those who believe in cosmic chemistry), AI created matches that felt eerily perfect, like your soulmate had been sitting in the app's database all along.

CAROUSELLING: THE TRAP WE'RE GLAD TO LEAVE BEHIND

Ah, the infamous swipe, chat, repeat trap! This trend had its 15 minutes of fame in 2024, though not for the right reasons. You know the drill: you match, exchange a flurry of messages, maybe even some voice notes or selfies, but somehow, you never quite make it to an actual date. In a year where intentional dating was celebrated, this trend became a bit of a cringe-worthy cautionary tale. Bottom line: life's too short for endless texting – take that leap and meet IRL!

–Sharon Dsilva, Femina



All you need to know about...

Fruits for weight gain

Q. Which fruit is best for weight gain?
A. Bananas, avocados, mangoes, and dried fruits like dates and prunes are excellent choices due to their calorie and nutrient content.

Q. Is Apple good for weight gain?
A. While apples are nutritious, they are lower in calories. Consider incorporating higher-calorie fruits for weight gain.

Q. Which is the highest-calorie fruit?
A. Avocado is one of the highest-calorie fruits, thanks to its healthy fats. Dates are also a type of high-calorie fruits for weight gain.

Q. How to gain weight fast?
A. Consume more calories than your body burns, focus on nutrient-rich foods, and include strength training exercises to build muscle mass.

Q. What are the best fruits for weight gain in India?
A. Some of the best fruits for weight gain in India are mangoes, chickoo, bananas, and custard apples. Nuts like almonds and cashews are also beneficial.

Q. Which banana is good for weight gain?
A. Both regular bananas and the larger, calorie-dense variety known as "Mysore bananas" or "Robusta bananas" are suitable for weight gain. Banana is one of the best fruit juice for weight gain.

Q. Best time to eat dry fruits for weight gain?
A. Eating a small handful of mixed dry fruits as a snack between meals or adding them to breakfast can be an effective way to increase calorie intake.

- Femina

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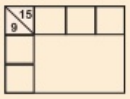
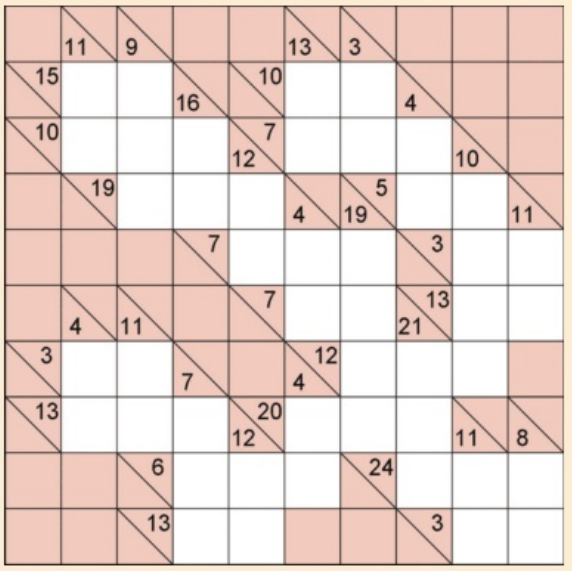
Kakuro

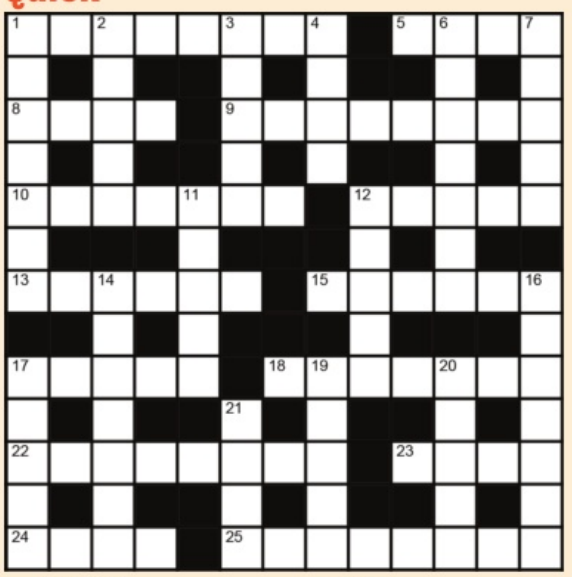
The numbers in the grey squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the grey square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 3 boxes horizontally next to 15 must contain 3 digits that add up to 15, whereas for 9, it is the 2 boxes placed vertically under it that must add up to 9. No zeros are used here, only the digits 1 through 9.



Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance, in the example, we cannot have the combination of 4+7+4 for 15.



Quick



ACROSS

1 Set in motion (8)
5 By mouth (4)
8 Berlin negative (4)
9 __ __ reason / makes complete sense? (6,2)
10 Fashionable (7)
12 Is aware (5)
13 Former President ___ Mukherjee (6)
15 Savage; very cruel (6)
17 Disreputable (5)
18 Meringue dessert (7)
22 Offensive to common modesty (8)
23 Popular pub in Indira Nagar (4)
24 Many millennia (4)
25 Great tombs of the Pharaohs (8)

DOWN

1 Forms a queue? (5,2)
2 Wholeness (5)
3 Lock catches (5)
4 Watch face (4)
6 Appear suddenly or in panic? (4,3)
7 Appearances (5)
11 Euro 2020 champions (5)
12 Russian ballet company (5)
14 Magic lamp owner (7)
16 Simple buildings (4-3)
17 River flowing through Paris (5)
19 Following (5)
20 Old Greek coins (5)
21 Not shallow (4)

Quoteuncode

This puzzle is a substitution cipher in which one letter stands for another. If you think that Q equals C, it will equal C throughout the puzzle. Single letters, short words and words using an apostrophe give you clues to locating vowels. Solution is by trial and error.

Today's CLUE: T EQUALS N

UMWNW BNW TR FOTWC OT TBUQNW, RTFX BNWBC RI PRFRQN, RTW BABOTCU BTRUMWN.

Linemaro

Can I borrow a kiss? I promise I will give it back

Mindchow

Those who can't change their minds can't change anything

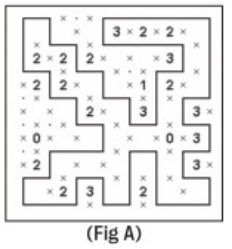
Joke of the day

Today, I made the little things count... by teaching math to midgets

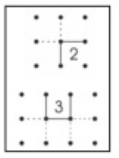
Loop

Rules

» Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A). » Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B). » Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines. » You can't draw lines around zeros. » Each puzzle has just one unique solution.



(Fig A)

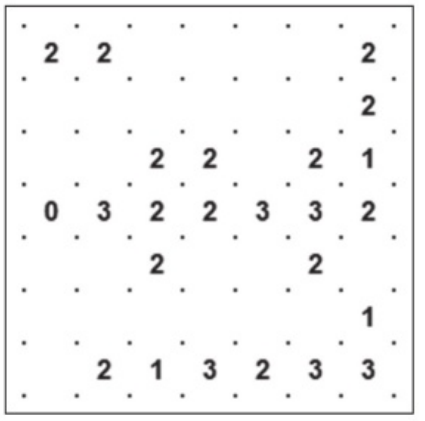


(Fig B) Not Allowed

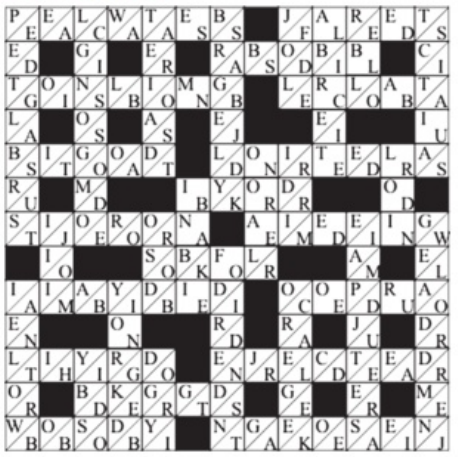
How to begin:

Example (Fig A) – Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a dead-end (Fig B)



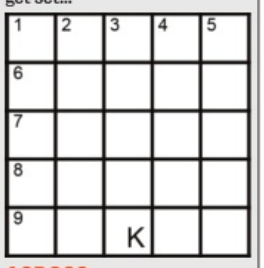
Strikeout



This crossword has no clues and the answer is there waiting for you. All you have to do is find it in each square. You have a choice of two letters, one of which you must strike out. If you choose correctly, you will be left with a grid that contains real words.

Fast five

How long do you think it will take you to unscramble the ten words shown below and fit them correctly into the grid in the order given one letter has already been entered to get you started? on your marks, get set...



ACROSS

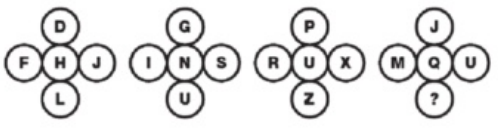
1 Raves; 6 Be Ill;
7 Go lev; 8 Laudo;
9 Skies

DOWN

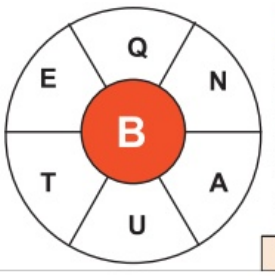
1 Galas; 2 Vi ill;
3 OK OBE (1-4); 4 U veer;
5 Se LSD

Mensapuzzle

Which letter replaces the question mark and completes the puzzle?



Bull's eye



How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown? Every word must contain the central letter. There should be one seven-letter word. British English Dictionary is used as a reference.

10 Average; 12 Good; 14 Outstanding

SudokuChallenge

	4	2		8		7	3	
	9		5		4		1	
		8	6		1	5		
	1		2	9	8		4	
		4	3		7	1		
	3		9		2		6	
	5	7		1		4	2	

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from one to nine must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Gofigure

Place the four numbers in the first, third, fifth, and seventh boxes and whatever operators you care to use in the second, fourth, and sixth boxes in the correct order to get the answer. Use the numbers only once.

Easy = 15

3 4 5 9

Medium = 24

2 2 3 6

Hard = 48

7 8 9 7

Hocusfocus

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

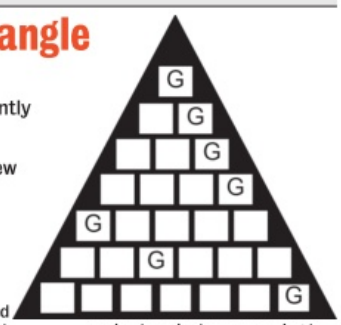
Differences: 1. Barbell is not as long. 2. Belt is lower. 3. Tattoo is moved. 4. Stripe on shorts is moved. 5. Floor mat is smaller. 6. Nose is different.

Riddler

What does this represent? indmakeia

Alpha triangle

1 Gram, abbr.
2 Silver symbol
3 Find fault constantly
4 Sharp taste
5 Oversized
6 North African stew
7 Defeating

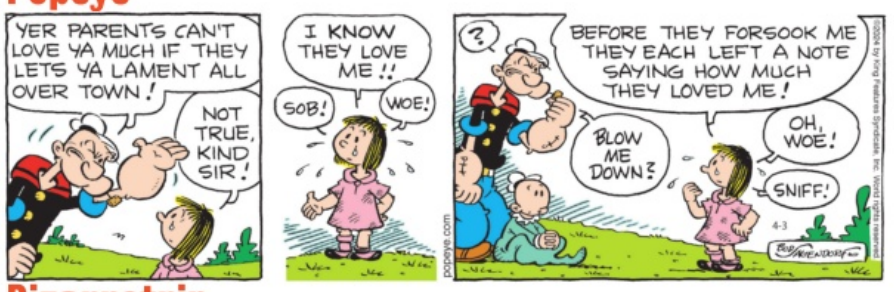


Beginning at the top move towards the bottom seven-letter word by adding a letter at each step and rearranging. A correct and different word must be made at each step answering to the clue given.

DIFFICULT TO SOLVE? FIND THESE SOLUTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE

COMICS

Popeye

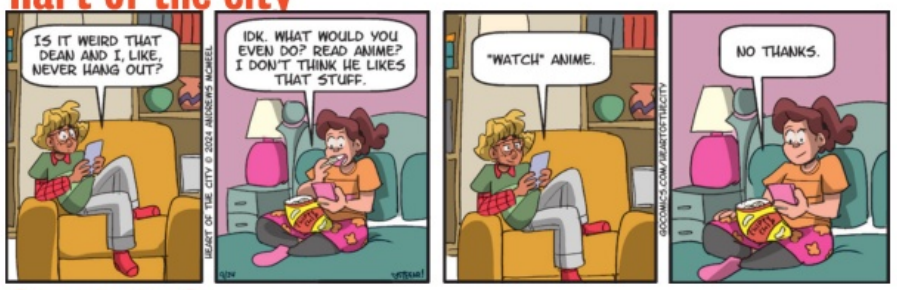

YER PARENTS CAN'T LOVE YA MUCH IF THEY LETS YA LAMENT ALL OVER TOWN!
NOT TRUE, KIND SIR!
I KNOW THEY LOVE ME!!
SOB!
WOE!
BEFORE THEY FORSOOK ME THEY EACH LEFT A NOTE SAYING HOW MUCH THEY LOVED ME!
BLOW ME DOWN?
OH, WOE!
SNIFF!
?
popeye.com

Bizarrotrip

In my day, we stole movies from actual video stores.
WaynoD & Piraro 9·24·24
BIZARRO.COM
©2024 Bizarro Studios Dist. by King Features

Diamond Lil

Hart of the city


IS IT WEIRD THAT DEAN AND I, LIKE, NEVER HANG OUT?
IDK. WHAT WOULD YOU EVEN DO? READ ANIME? I DON'T THINK HE LIKES THAT STUFF.
"WATCH" ANIME.
NO THANKS.
@COMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

Crankshaft

THEY CHANGED THE PITCHING ROTATION... YOU'VE BEEN SWITCHED FROM TOMORROW NIGHT TO SATURDAY!
MUDHENS
OH, YEAH...
AND BECAUSE I COULDN'T READ THE ROSTER... I MISSED MY CHANCE TO PITCH FOR THE BIG LEAGUE SCOUTS.
tombatiuk.com/books
BATIUK & DAVIS
9-24

Mutts

WHAT YOUR STARS SAY TODAY

Aries Mar 21 – Apr 20
Today, you may feel very happy as your losses will likely become profits. Your seniors may appreciate your work, and you could see changes in your position, place, or responsibilities at work, possibly in the form of a promotion. Your opponents and hidden enemies may now be under control. Singles and lovebirds may make important decisions regarding marriage with the help of relatives or friends.

Taurus Apr 21 – May 20
Today, peace may fill your mind, and you might plan to invest some capital in your business, increasing liquidity. Your earnings could boost your financial health. Romantic moments with your spouse may enhance harmony in your family life. Singles may find a suitable match, and lovebirds may decide to get married. Students will be blessed with good karma.

Gemini May 21 – Jun 21
Today, destiny is on your side, and your health may improve. You might plan to visit a religious place with family or friends, and you could consider donating to a religious site or charity. Property-related deals may be completed, and you might plan for overseas travel related to work.

Cancer Jun 22 – July 23
Today, you may fall victim to conspiracies, so avoid getting involved in controversies. Your strong willpower and blessings from elders may protect you from difficult situations. It's advisable to avoid arguments in your love life and refrain from rush driving or adventurous trips.

Leo Jul 24 – Aug 23
Today, you will feel happy and at peace. Your focus on your goals will be strong, and you may enjoy romantic moments with your spouse, strengthening your bond. You will also be busy with other domestic issues.

Virgo Aug 24 – Sep 23
Today, you may feel more enthusiastic, and your performance at work could be outstanding, boosting your relationship with seniors. You may gain new responsibilities, including promotions. In legal matters, you might hear good news, and your opponents and hidden enemies may be under control.

Libra Sep 24 – Oct 22
Today, you may complete difficult tasks with ease, boosting your confidence. Past investments may bring good gains. You are advised to avoid arguments over trivial topics, as they may waste your precious time.

Scorpio Oct 23 – Nov 22
Today may not be favourable. You could feel unhappy and dissatisfied with your current situation. It's best to remain patient and avoid making hasty decisions. You are advised to take care of your parent's health.

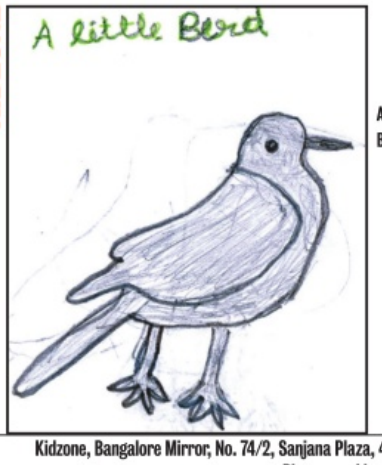
Sagittarius Nov 23 – Dec 22
Today, you may feel enthusiastic and focused on your goals. Achieving your targets will be easier than expected. You may take short, work-related trips that could bring benefits shortly. Your colleagues and friends may help you complete important projects.

Capricorn Dec 23 – Jan 20
Today, you may feel happy and healthy, which will give you inner strength and self-confidence. Your conscience will prevent you from manipulating tasks, helping you maintain a good reputation. Your social prestige may increase.

Aquarius Jan 21 – Feb 19
Today, you are blessed by the moon. You may receive rewards for your social services and be appreciated by your seniors, possibly earning a promotion. Your losses may turn into profits, increasing liquidity in your business. You may plan to invest more capital into your family business, boosting it in the near future.

Pisces Feb 20 – Mar 20
Today, you may feel disappointed. You are advised to control your arrogance, as it may lead to losses due to your speech. Lovebirds should be cautious during discussions, as arguments may negatively affect their relationship.

KIDZONE



Akhilesh S, Bengaluru

Sanjanna, Bengaluru

Kidzone, Bangalore Mirror, No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru-560 011;
Please send hard copies of your artwork in A4 size only.

SOLUTIONS

SOLVE IN 1M
[(16−4)/4]×4
3×4
12

BULL'S EYE
abet, abut, bane, BANQUET, bate, bean, beat, beau, bent, beta, bunt, butane, tuba, tube

FAST FIVE

L	I	B	E	L
G	L	O	V	E
A	L	O	U	D
A	I	K	E	S

RIDDLER
Make in India. The word "make" is wedged between the word "India" (ind-ia)

STRIKE OUT

P	A	L	A	T	E	S		F	L	E	E	T		
E	I		R		A	B	O	I		L		I		
G	O	S	L	I	N	G		E	C	L	A	T		
A	S		A		E		I			U				
S	T	O	O	D		L	O	I	T	E	R	S		
	O		O	B	O	L		M		L				
S	I	E	R	R	A		A	I	D	I	N	G		
	M		B	Y	R	D		O						
T			T			I		U						
S	E	A	M	Y		P	A	V	L	O	V	A		
	L		L			O				E				
P	R	A	N	A	B		B	R	U	T	A	L		
			T			I		U						
S	T	Y	L	I	S	H		K	N	O	W	S		
		E		T		P		L		H		K		
N	E	I	N		S	T	A	N	D	S	T	O		
I		N		A		I				U		O		
L	A	U	N	C	H	E	D		O	R	A	L		

QUICK

E	O	N	S		P	Y	R	A	M	I	D	S		
N		I		E		E		L		O				
I	N	D	E	C	E	N	T		T	O	I	T		
E		D		F		B		N						
S	E	A	M	Y		P	A	V	L	O	V	A		
	L		L			O				E				
P	R	A	N	A	B		B	R	U	T	A	L		
U		T			I		U							
S	T	Y	L	I	S	H		K	N	O	W	S		
E		T		P		L		H		K				
N	E	I	N		S	T	A	N	D	S	T	O		
I		N		A		I				U		O		
L	A	U	N	C	H	E	D		O	R	A	L		

MENSA PUZZLE
X. In each diagram, the central letter falls midway between the left and right hand letters, and the top and bottom letters.

QUOTE UNCODE
There are no lines in nature, only areas of colour, one against another.

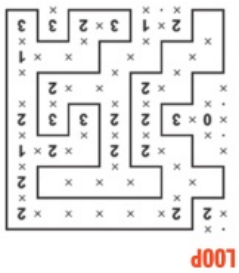
SUDOKU

8	2	9	4	6	5	3	7	1
6	5	7	8	1	3	4	2	9
4	3	1	9	7	2	8	6	5
9	6	4	3	5	7	1	8	2
3	1	5	2	9	8	6	4	7
2	7	8	6	4	1	5	9	3
7	9	6	5	3	4	2	1	8
5	4	2	1	8	9	7	3	6
1	8	3	7	2	6	9	5	4

ALPHA TRIANGLE
G, Ag, Nag, Tang, Giant, Tagine, Beating.

GO FIGURE
Easy
9 + 4 − 3 + 5 = 15
6 − 2 x 2 x 3 = 24
Medium
7 x 7 − 9 + 8 = 48
Hard

LOOP



KAKURO

Volume No 17, Issue No 260 RNI NO:KARENG/2007/21142 Published for the Proprietors, Metropolitan Media Company Ltd by R.J. Prakashan at No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru-560 011 and printed by him at Bennett Coleman & Co Ltd., The Times of India Press, No. 9/10/11-A, 4th Main, KIADB Bommasandra Industrial Area, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore - 560 099 (Phones : Press : 080-22899999; Editorial : 080-40877666, Fax – 40877545, Registered Office: No. 74/2, Sanjana Plaza, 4th & 5th Floor, Elephant Rock Road, Jayanagar 3rd block, Bengaluru - 560 011, Email : mybangaloremirror@timesofindia.com Editor : Ms. Seena Menon - responsible for selection of news under PRB Act. © Reproduction in whole or in part without the written permission of the Publisher is prohibited.

Too filmy

Some of the hottest rumours and incidents that grabbed attention this year in the film industry

2024 has been a year of unforgettable drama, both on and off the screen, as Bollywood found itself at the heart of some of the most talked-about controversies. Here are a few that grabbed headlines for days... -ETimes

Poonam Pandey's hoax death news

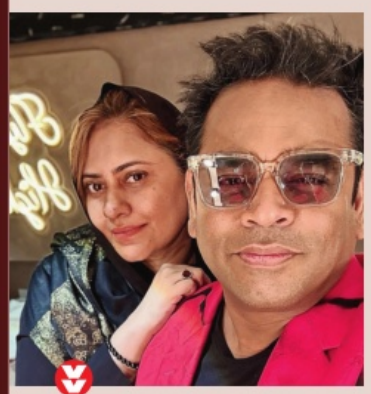
Poonam Pandey made headlines in February 2024 when reports claimed she had passed away from cervical cancer, with her manager confirming the news. However, it was later revealed that it was a marketing stunt by an advertising agency to raise awareness about cervical cancer.

Aishwarya Rai - Abhishek Bachchan divorce reports

Rumours about a possible split between Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan began when they arrived separately at Mukesh Ambani's son Anant Ambani's wedding to Radhika Merchant. Rumours also spread that Abhishek was romantically linked to his Dasvi co-star, Nimrat Kaur. However, Aishwarya and Abhishek's recent appearances together at an event and their daughter Aaradhya's annual day have put an end to any speculation about a fallout.

Vikrant Massey's retirement post

Vikrant Massey sparked retirement rumours with a recent social media post where he announced he would meet audiences "one last time" in 2025. However, he clarified that he is not retiring but just taking a break. In interviews, he explained that his statement was misinterpreted by everyone.



AR Rahman and Saira Banu divorce and affair rumours

In November 2024, AR Rahman shocked fans by announcing his separation from his wife, Saira Banu, after 29 years of marriage. Following this, rumours spread claiming that Rahman was dating musician Mohini Dey, especially after she also announced her divorce from Mark Hartsuch around the same time. However, Mohini quickly denied the rumours, calling Rahman a "father figure".

Kangana Ranaut's slap incident

Kangana Ranaut made headlines after taking her oath as a Member of Parliament during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, following her win for BJP from Himachal Pradesh's Mandi constituency. However, she later was reportedly slapped by a CISF personnel named Kulwinder Kaur at Chandigarh airport. The slap was allegedly in response to Kangana's previous statements about the 2020 farmers' protest.

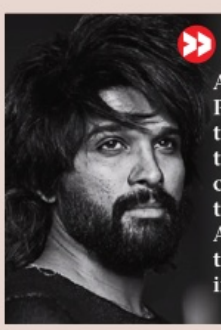
Nayanthara-Dhanush's legal feud

One of the biggest controversies in South Indian cinema involved Nayanthara and Dhanush, who had a legal dispute over a 3-second clip. The Lady Superstar criticized Dhanush for filing a civil suit against her after she used a brief clip from the film Naanum Rowdy Dhaan in her Netflix documentary. Dhanush filed a lawsuit against Nayanthara, her husband Vignesh Shivan, and their production company, Rowdy Pictures Private Limited, demanding Rs. 10 crore in damages.

Firing at Salman Khan's Galaxy apartment

On April 14, 2024, two men on a bike fired shots at the first floor of Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's Galaxy Apartments. The incident made headlines as the shooters were reportedly members of the Lawrence Bishnoi Gang, who allegedly targeted Salman. The actor, who was inside his home at the time, heard the gunshots and immediately alerted the police.

Allu Arjun's arrest



Allu Arjun's celebration for the success of Pushpa 2: The Rule was marred when a visit to Sandhya Theatre on December 4, 2024, triggered a stampede due to the excited crowd. Several people were injured, and tragically, a 35-year-old woman lost her life. Allu Arjun was arrested in connection with the stampede incident but was released on interim bail by a Telangana court.

SANDALWOOD SHOTS
Y MAHESWARA REDDY

As per guru's advice

HR Nataraj, a politician-cum-builder, debuts as a producer in Sandalwood with Guns and Roses. Arjun, the son of script writer Ajay Kumar, debuts as a hero with this movie directed by Srinivas Kumar that is scheduled for release on January 3.

"My philosopher and teacher Shyam Shankar Bhat advised me to bankroll a movie. Director Srinivas Kumar is my friend. While having a chat with him, he showed me Arjun's photo. I asked my philosopher's advice. He gave me the green signal to have Arjun as a hero for this movie. The movie has come out well. I appreciate all the cast and crew. We are planning to release the movie through Goku Films," said Nataraj.

Srinivas Kumar said he has worked as associate director for many Kannada movies in the last 25 years. "Guns and Roses is my maiden movie as an independent director. Arjun and Yashvika Nishkala are the lead pair," said the director. Arjun said he debuted in Sandalwood as a child artiste in Nanda Loves Nandita. "I had basic training in acting under the guidance of Thriller Manju and others. The action scenes in Guns and Roses have turned out well," said Arjun.

Teacher–student bond

Heddur Manjunath is ready with his third movie Paathshaala which explores the bond between teachers and students during three to four decades ago. The movie's teaser was released by Sihi Kahi Chandru and his better half Geetha at a function held at Kalavidara Sangha.

Manjunath said that Sihi and Geetha have helped him a lot to establish himself as a director. "I made my debut in Sandalwood more than 15 years ago. I was associated with Final Cut Productions of Sihi Kahi Chandru and Geetha. The tele serial Parvathi Parameshwara brought me name and fame," said Manjunath.

Manjunath has also bankrolled the movie Paatashaala in association with his wife Preethi under the MS Square Movies banner.

"We organised a workshop for around 450 children to provide basic training for them. The movie revolves around the bonding between students and teachers during the 1980s. Sudhakar Bannanje plays the headmaster in the movie," he said.